

GENERAL REMARKS.

81. All the Extra Assistant Conservators are reported to have worked well.

Of the Range Forest Officers the following are reported for special mention:—

Rangers.

Shaikh Ahmed Nur Mahomed.

Hari Anant Bhadbhade.

Foresters.

Esa Mahomed Viráji.

Shaikh Usman Shaikh Idrus.

The office establishments of the Divisional Forest Officers are reported to have worked well as has that of the Conservator of Forests under Mr. S. B. Ránglekar.

The subordinate protective establishment is reported to have worked fairly well. Eighteen forest guards were dismissed during the year as against 23 of last year for misconduct and neglect of duty. Four of these were dismissed in South Tháná in connection with the burning of grass collected on the Tánzá catchment for despatch to the famine districts. Nine men were degraded, all these in the South Tháná Division. Eleven men died of various diseases. Náráyán Rájáram, Ranger, Rs. 50, in charge of the Sálsette Range, and a round guard died of the plague in Tháná and Bhiwandi respectively.

CONSERVATOR'S TOUR OF INSPECTION.

82. Camp was formed at Chinchoti in the Bassein Range on the 5th November, whence (as well as from Parol, the next camp) a large number of the Bassein blocks were inspected. With one or two exceptions the felling of the coupes of the year had either not been commenced or having been commenced had been almost at once stopped by the refusal of the villagers to work or to allow outsiders to work. Mr. DuBoulay, Assistant Collector, was in camp with the Collector, and possibly as a result of his presence among them shortly after the villagers changed their minds and felling work commenced everywhere. The forests in this neighbourhood showed everywhere signs of hacking and looting to provide dead wood under the concession to the wild tribes. The camp was moved to Bhiwandi on the 23rd, but the Honourable Mr. Shuttleworth who had been placed on special Famine Duty having asked that measures should be undertaken to purchase and press grass for despatch to the Dekhan at all the railway stations beyond Kalyán, the Conservator moved to Wássind on the Railway. Here he was joined by Mr. Edie, Divisional Forest Officer, East Tháná, and arrangements were made to purchase grass through the Forest Dépôt Officers. With the Christmas holidays Mr. Edie left to take charge of the new North Tháná Division, but the Conservator remained until the end of January, by which time the purchase of the available grass was well advanced and the immediately available baling presses had been received, set up and were working smoothly. The operations were placed under the direct supervision of Mr. Phadke, Extra Assistant Conservator, South Tháná, under the immediate orders of the Honourable Mr. Shuttleworth. In the meanwhile it had been decided to collect grass departmentally in the Tánzá Forests. Mr. Máster, Extra Assistant Conservator, Central Tháná, had been placed in charge of this work early in the new year. After a short halt at Tánzá the Conservator closed office there on 14th February and moved to the Dáhánu Range, where office reopened on the 18th. From this date till the 17th March a number of blocks in the eastern portion of the Dáhánu and Umbargaon Ranges were inspected. In more than a dozen blocks visited no fire had occurred for the past ten years, thus presenting a marked contrast to the reserve on Máhuli Hill, which, while the Conservator was camped at Wássind, was fired five separate times. This shows that fires are preventible by the people if they think it worth while. Increased establishment will enable us to deal more efficiently with fires which

occur, but "public opinion" alone can prevent their occurrence, and this public opinion can only be formed by enforcing communal responsibility. The effect of immunity from fire on these Dáhanu blocks is most striking. Some of the young coupes are so thick that it is difficult to force a way through them except along a few foot-paths. On the other hand, it was noted that far too few standards had been reserved in these forests, which must result in a short supply of the larger logs in the next exploitation.

Immediately after the Holi holidays the camp was moved by rail to Kim and on the 26th office was opened at Mándvi. Up to the Easter holidays the Conservator toured through the Mándvi Taluka, the office remaining at Mándvi owing to difficulty in obtaining carts. And during the Easter holiday a flying camp was made to visit the sleeper felling at Mheskátri in the Dángs. On the 19th April the camp was moved back to Kim and thence by rail to Pálghar and by road to Vádá, where office reopened on the 26th. A number of blocks of Vádá and Khardi Ranges were inspected, and in company with Mr. Dodgson, the Divisional Forest Officer, some experiments in marking reserves in the coupes with a stamp were carried out. About the 20th May the camp moved *via* the Shirghát Road to the Násik District and was enrailed at Igatpuri for headquarters, where office reopened for the monsoon on the 26th May.

R. C. WROUGHTON,
Conservator of Forests, Northern Circle.

Bándrá, 15th October 1897.